



## Prosperity Policy Panel

Report of: The Mobile Phone Masts Task and  
Finish Group  
Date: 14<sup>th</sup> June 2006  
Open

# Mobile Phone Masts Review

## 1. Introduction

1.1 These are the findings of the Mobile Phone Masts Task and Finish Group, which was established by the Environment and Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel to consider:

- Health Issues related to mobile phone masts.
- Public views on mobile phone use and phone masts.
- Planning regulations and appeals.
- Current policies regarding masts on Council owned land.

## 2. Background to the Review

2.1 At the Panel's meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2005, the Panel discussed the issue of mobile phone masts and equipment as being a subject of great importance to the general public. Concerns over mobile phones continue to be expressed at a local and national level, with frequent coverage in the media. The existence of conflicting findings from research into links between health and masts has resulted in a perceived health risk. On this basis, Members agreed to undertake a review into Mobile Phone Masts within the District.

2.2 The Panel accordingly appointed a Task and Finish Group to research current available information concerning mobile phone masts and to make appropriate recommendations to a future meeting of the Panel.

2.3 The Task and Finish Group comprised Councillors Mrs F M Oborski (Chairman), A J Buckley, Mrs J Fairbrother-Millis, Miss S C Meekings, C D Nicholls and Mrs J L Salter. There were also two members of the public on the Group: a practising GP and a member of the public with an interest in the Planning aspects of the review.

- 2.4 The Group met to consider evidence for first time on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2005 and a further three times on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2005, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006 and 13<sup>th</sup> April 2006.
- 2.5 During its review, the Group utilised a range of evidence gathering techniques to consider the key issues, including the following:
- A question and answer session with the Council Liaison Manager from the Mobile Operators' Association (MOA) and representatives from the following companies: '3', 'O2', 'T-Mobile' and 'Vodafone.
  - A question and answer session with Dr Michael Clark, a scientist from the Health Protection Agency (HPA) Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards, Radiation Protection Division (formerly the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB), who had been invited to answer questions on specific health matters.
  - Background information from the Internet, including summaries of recent reports on mobile phones and health.
  - District Council Officers' written and oral contributions.
  - A Mobile Phone Survey published in the Shuttle/Times and News on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005 (with a closing date of 16<sup>th</sup> December 2005).
  - A Young People's Mobile Phone Survey which was distributed to First School and High School students within the District (with a closing date 10<sup>th</sup> March 2006).
  - The Group also looked at the practices of other local authorities, including Birmingham City Council and Coventry City Council.
- 2.6 Details of the written submissions and associated papers are listed in section 7 of this report.

### **3. Background to Mobile Phones**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Mobile phones have been widely available since the mid-1980s. The widespread use of mobile phones is acknowledged as a recent phenomenon and there are around 60 million mobile phone subscribers in the UK. Their use has escalated over the past decade and to many they are now an essential part of business, commerce and society. It is anticipated that the use of mobile phones and related technologies will continue to increase for the foreseeable future, as customer demand dictates the number and location of base stations. With it grows the need

to offer a service to all mobile phone users and build more of the base stations that enable mobiles to work.

### 3.2 What are mobile phones?

Mobile phones are low powered radio sets. They use radio waves in the same way that many other telecommunication devices use them, including televisions and radios used by emergency services, e.g the army and the police.

### 3.3 Mobile Phone Networks

Mobile phone networks are cellular networks. Radio base stations receive and transmit low level emissions. Each antenna of a base station covers a cell, which is a restricted geographic area of the country. Each base station can support only a limited number of users.

Customer demand dictates the number and location of base stations. Thus the size of the cell depends on current and future customer call usage in the area, and also on the physical terrain of the area. Obstacles such as buildings, trees and hills can affect radio signals and have to be taken into account during the cellular engineering of the network. Without a network of base stations, mobile phones will not work.

### 3.4 Need for continuing Development

The current technology for the operation of mobile phone masts is known as "2<sup>nd</sup> Generation" ('2G' or 'GSM') and the supporting infrastructure is largely in place to accommodate this.

The new generation of mobile communications systems, which includes access to the internet and video conferencing, is known as '3<sup>rd</sup> Generation' ('3G') and the new 3G networks will potentially need additional masts because they provide more advanced services.

### 3.5 TETRAs (Terrestrial Trunked Radio)

TETRA stands for 'Terrestrial Trunked Radio'. This is a digital mobile radio standard especially designed for professional users who need high reliability and security and which also requires a mast infrastructure. TETRA networks are cellular and very similar to mobile phone networks. TETRA systems are used by emergency services in a number of countries and also by commercial organisations with mobile workforces or large vehicle fleets. Handsets are generally placed adjacent to the body, in particular the vicinity of the waist or chest.

## **4. The Review**

### **4.1 The Mobile Phone Operators**

- 4.1.1 Five mobile phone operators in the UK are currently licensed to deliver the networks – Orange, Vodafone, 3, T-Mobile and O2 and they, in turn, are represented by the Mobile Operators' Association (MOA). (A sixth operator, O2 Airwave Service, delivers the TETRA network).
- 4.1.2 The MOA acts as an interface between the mobile phone operators and local planners, elected members, resident groups, amenity bodies and the public, and represents the operators in public debate on relevant issues.
- 4.1.3 The MOA introduced its “10 Best Practice Commitments”, in August 2001. This ‘voluntary code’ was used to ensure transparency in building mobile phone networks, to provide more information to the public and local planners, and to boost the community’s role in the siting of radio base stations. There has been a review of the use of the Code as a result of which certain recommendations have been made by the University of Reading, and are up to the ODPM (now the Department of Communities and Local Government).
- 4.1.4 The latest rollout plans of the five mobile phone operators, as published in October 2005, were requested and subsequently distributed to Members of the Task and Finish Group to form part of the scrutiny review. It was noted that the Plan was only updated on a yearly basis and 'new' sites identified during the year were not included. They did, however, give information relating to which parts of the district the operators are focusing on to fulfil their coverage requirements.

The plans indicated those sites:

- which are already built and operational;
- which have received planning consent and are soon to be operational;
- which are proposed and current full planning or notification applications are awaiting determination;
- which are proposed and a planning application has been refused;
- which are proposed and a planning application has been refused and has proceeded to planning appeal;
- which are proposed and may or may not result in the submission of a planning or notification application.

### **RECOMMENDED to Cabinet**

- 1. Council ask the Mobile Operators' Association to request the Mobile Phone Operators to update the Rollout Plan on a quarterly basis.**

2. An annual Presentation from representatives of the Mobile Operators' Association be invited to the Prosperity Panel to coincide with the production of the Rollout Plan.

## 4.2 Site Sharing and Local Planning Authority issues

- 4.2.1 Members were advised that there were two broad procedures currently in place at this Council relating to planning applications currently in place: prior notification, which related to masts fifteen metres or under in height and full application for those masts over fifteen metres in height.
- 4.2.2 Near neighbours within 50 to 100 metres of the potential site were notified of any pending applications. In rural areas those residents within 250 metres of the proposed site were notified.
- 4.2.3 Indications were that the height of phone masts invariably need to increase by five metres where operators need to share masts.
- 4.2.4 This Council has not, to date, had any costs awarded against it as a result of appeals against decisions to refuse applications as most have proceeded by way of written representations where no costs award is made. However, as the appellant has the right to indicate a preferred method of appeal, there is the possibility of a costs award where, inter alia, the Council is considered to have acted unreasonably in either one or all reasons for refusal.
- 4.2.5 When considering whether to refuse Mast applications, there must be valid planning grounds for doing so, such as where there are concerns over visual impact, but each application has to be treated on an individual basis.
- 4.2.6 There is currently no policy for siting masts on Council owned land. The risk of introducing a policy prohibiting masts is that Mobile Phone Mast Companies might be forced to select more sensitive sites instead, which is something the Members have to consider.

### **RECOMMENDED to Cabinet**

1. **No action be taken at this time to prevent Wyre Forest District Council owned property being available to mobile phone network operators. However, any request be subject to the agreement of the majority of Members within the relevant Ward, before it is approved by the Council (this does not apply to applications or notifications to the Council as Local Planning Authority).**
  2. **That mobile phone operators be encouraged to share masts on Council owned land, when appropriate and wherever possible.**
- 4.2.7 The perceived risk and fear arising out of health concerns would be helped by adopting consultation methods aimed at involving elected members as well as members of the public.

4.2.8 Evidence suggests that around two-thirds of base station sites in the UK are either shared or placed on existing buildings or structures. Site sharing is the most cost-effective option for operators, and remains a priority with operators. However this is not always technically feasible or environmentally desirable. The Local Planning Authority may prefer a number of smaller masts. Also, a mast carrying antennas for more than one operator is usually taller and more substantial than a mast for a single operator.

**RECOMMENDED to Cabinet**

**The Council maintain an up-to-date list of all approved base stations/masts, which should be readily available for public inspection, to assist both the public and operators considering site sharing opportunities.**

4.2.9 Some antennae are hidden behind street signs, shop fronts etc. These tiny radio base station antennae help operators meet high customer demand in busy areas. They are usually mounted at street level on external walls, lamp posts or neon shop signs and can often be disguised as building features. They have lower radio wave outputs than larger base stations.

4.2.10 Where possible, operators advise that they try to prevent phone masts from harming the landscape. Slimline versions with smaller head frames are being introduced. They can be painted to blend in with their surroundings, disguised as trees or placed on street lamps. Base station antennas can also be put on structures like roof tops, high voltage electricity pylons or large radio communication masts.

4.2.11 Operators have confirmed that in planning the development of the network it is important that Local Planning Authorities play a key role. In particular, they need to be aware that the restriction of site choice can result in operators having to progress less suitable sites in terms of planning, environmental impact and community terms.

### 4.3. Mobile Phone Survey

- 4.3.1 The first Mobile Phone Survey was published in the Shuttle Times and News and encouraged local residents to have a direct input into the research, the analysis of which would form part of the Panel's final report. 50 completed questionnaires were received and a briefing note was reported back to the main Panel at its meetings on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2006, which gave a detailed analysis of the survey.
- 4.3.2 The majority of respondents had lived in the Wyre Forest district for 20 years or more (76%), with 66% of those people currently living in Kidderminster and the remainder evenly split between Stourport-on-Severn, Bewdley and rural parishes.
- 4.3.3 52% of respondents were employed, 42% retired and the remainder responsible for looking after the home/dependants.
- 4.3.4 84% of respondents confirmed that they had a mobile phone.
- 4.3.5 66% of respondents said that they used their phones mainly for personal calls, but only used them for up to 1 minute at a time.
- 4.3.6 Only 16% of people who responded did not own a mobile phone. These respondents were all over 55 years of age and were generally retired and had lived in the District for 20 years or more. The main reasons they gave for not having a mobile phone were that they did not need one and also that they had health concerns.
- 4.3.7 Health concerns were also the main reason people gave for objections to mobile phone masts, where 42% of respondents stated health reasons; 21% visual reasons; 22% de-valuation of property and 15% property saleability.
- 4.3.8 Regarding the location of mobile phone masts, 52% of respondents were aware of where the nearest phone mast was to their home. 88% of respondents said they would object to a phone mast application within 500 metres of their property and 500 metres from a school.
- 4.3.9 Only 12% of respondents had mobile phones which used 3G technology. The remaining 72% had a 2G mobile phone, of which three-quarters of the respondents used mainly for making calls, with the remainder texting.
- 4.3.10 Of the 18% who responded who had children under the age of 18 years, 6% of those children were under the age of 10 and were not given the use of a mobile phone, and 12% were aged 11 or upwards and all had the use of a mobile phone.



#### 4.4. Children's Mobile Phone Survey

4.4.1 The Task and Finish Group was also keen to involve young people in the review, and on this basis organised a survey to assess the impact the mobile phone industry was having on children of school age.

4.4.2 A Questionnaire was issued to local First, Middle and High Schools in the Districts, to include a breakdown of their ages and what they used their mobile phones for.

4.4.3 In total, 569 responses were received for the survey of school children, with a breakdown from the relevant schools as follows:

First School: 175 responses.

Middle School: 14 responses.

High School: 380 responses.

4.4.4 The average age of the children who responded was 12 years old and out of the 569 replies received, 78% owned a mobile phone. The children were, on average, 10 years old when they had their first mobile phone.

4.4.5 The results from the Young People's Mobile Phone Survey are attached in tabled format at Appendix 2 to the report.

#### 4.5 Dr Michael Clark - National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB)

4.5.1 As the Mobile Phone Operators had no specific expertise in Health matters the Group invited Dr Mike Clark, Head of Press and Information Group, National Radiological Protection Board, to attend an open meeting. Dr Clark explained that the NRPB undertakes research to advance knowledge about protection from the risks of mobile phone masts; provides laboratory and technical services; runs training courses; provides expert information and has a significant advisory role in the UK.

4.5.2 Dr Clark answered questions specifically relating to health issues and mobile phones which were previously reported to the Group, and also discussed the following points.

a) *The Stewart Report*

In May 2000, an independent expert group chaired by Sir William Stewart wrote a report on mobile phone technologies, which concluded that the balance of evidence to date did not suggest that these technologies caused adverse health effects.

The report did, however, recognise that there were gaps in current knowledge and that there may be biological effects as a result of exposures below guidelines, and called for a precautionary approach to be adopted.

b) *The Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP)*

ICNIRP (the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection) is an international independent scientific organisation that provides guidance and advice on the health hazards of radiation exposure. Its guidelines are endorsed by the World Health Organisation (WHO). ICNIRP's aim is to bring together independent experts to provide advice.

The ICNIRP guidelines are based on an analysis of all relevant scientific literature, and has been fully adopted by the UK's five mobile phone network operators. The guidelines have been put in place to protect the public.

Although the balance of evidence from research suggests that phone masts pose no health risk to the general population, international health and safety guidelines have been put in place by ICNIRP to limit public exposure to radio waves from base stations and mobile phones.

The ICNIRP Certificate is issued based on the design of the base station. The base station is designed so that those members of the public within close proximity of the station are not exposed to levels above what the guidelines recommend.

c) *The National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB)*

The National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) is the body responsible for advising on Electromagnetic Fields (EMFs). Internationally, (ICNIRP performs a similar role). Both bodies come to very similar conclusions about acceptable exposure levels.

d) *The Advisory Group on Non-Ionizing Radiation (AGNIR) Report*

In December 2003, the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB's) Independent Advisory Group on Non-ionising Radiation (AGNIR) published a report. It concluded that

"The weight of evidence now available does not suggest that there are adverse health effects from exposures to RF (radiofrequency) fields below guideline levels ..."

"Exposure levels from living near to mobile phone base stations are extremely low, and the overall evidence indicates that they are unlikely to pose a risk to health."

## 4.6 Health Issues

- 4.6.1 During the review, Members became increasingly concerned about the potential health problems that can be reportedly related to digital mobile phone use, although acknowledged that these symptoms could be attributed to any number of other factors in the mobile phones users' environment, such as working with computers, stress, driving or reading.
- 4.6.2 After considering all of the evidence placed before them, the Task and Finish Group requested a section of the final report be dedicated specifically to health issues, as it felt that this focus would form an important part of its draft recommendations.
- 4.6.3 Members requested the following health issues in particular be summarised in the Group's final report.

### **a) Mobile Phones and Base Stations**

Research suggests that there are direct and indirect ways by which health could be affected as a result of exposure to mobile phones and base stations. These are by thermal (heating) effects caused mainly by holding mobile phones close to the head for hand-held use, or to parts of the body closest to the phone during hands-free use. Hands-free extensions, which allow the phone to be held away from the body, have the potential for reducing exposure, but some recent tests have cast doubt on their general level of effectiveness.

There is evidence that using a mobile phone whilst driving, even with hands-free technology, can increase the risk of accidents. Also some people's well-being may be adversely affected by the environmental impact of mobile phone base stations sited near their homes, schools or other buildings, as well as by their fear of perceived direct effects.

### **b) Acoustic Neuromas**

An acoustic neuroma is a benign tumour on the auditory nerve that usually grows slowly over a period of years before it is diagnosed. It occurs in less than one adult per 100,000 per year. No firm evidence was found during the Group's investigations to suggest that mobile phones can impact on acoustic neuromas.

### **c) Possible risks to children**

The Group acknowledged that the youth market was highly lucrative where the selling of mobile phones was concerned. In particular, by advertising cheap voice and text messages.

The Group also acknowledged that there were parents who felt they wanted their children to have mobile phones for safety reasons.

The Group perceived that children were more likely than adults to be vulnerable to any unrecognised health risks from mobile phone use and that parents should ensure their children use mobile phones only when absolutely necessary because of the potential health risks, including brain tumours. It was felt that if there was a health risk - which remained unproven - it would have a greater effect on young people.

The Group felt that an increased need to educate children regarding their use of mobile phones should be acknowledged within the final report. (The age of 16 is usually recognised as the age at which individuals are sufficiently mature to make informed choices about other 'adult' activities).

**e) Programmed Cell Death**

Twelve institutes in seven countries have found genotoxic effects and modified expressions on numerous genes and proteins after Radio frequency and extremely low frequency exposure at low levels, below current international safety guidance, to living cells in-vitro. It has been suggested that these results confirm the likelihood of long-term genetic damage in the blood and brains of users of mobile phones and other sources of electromagnetic fields. However, there are many differing opinions.

**f) General Health Issues**

A number of health problems can be reportedly related to digital mobile phone use, including headaches, eye problems, earache, buzzing in the head, poor concentration and memory, fatigue and skin irritation. However, these symptoms could be attributed to any number of other factors in the mobile phones users' environment, such as working with computers, stress, driving or reading.

The Department of Health updated their leaflet on Mobile Phones and Health in 2005.

**RECOMMENDED to Cabinet**

**That it notes the Panel's view that:**

- **The widespread use of mobile phones by children for non-essential calls should be discouraged.**
- **The mobile phone industry should refrain from promoting the use of mobile phones by children.**

- **The County Council also be referred to the Department of Health's leaflet on Mobile Phones and Health.**
- **From a health point of view an educational programme should be considered, and the Panel therefore requests the following:**
  - a) **The County Council Health Scrutiny Panel consider an education programme warning children of the potential risk of intensive mobile phone use, and**
  - b) **The County Council Health Scrutiny Panel consider issuing guidance to Head Teachers and school governors with regard to the potential risk of intensive mobile phone use.**

4.2.9 The use of existing mobile phone mast sites is encouraged by Planning Policy Guidance 8 (PPG8) which states that "it is the Government's firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards. It remains central Government's responsibility to decide what measures are necessary to protect public health.

In the Government's view, if a proposed mobile phone base station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure it should not be necessary for a Local Planning Authority, in processing an application for planning permission or prior approval, to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them. (Section 30)".

#### 4.7 Telecommunications Masts (Planning Control) Bill

- 4.7.1 The District Council's Cabinet Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2006, considered a recommendation from the Environment and Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel from its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2006.
- 4.7.2 This related to a proposed response to a letter from the Campaign for Planning Sanity dated 7<sup>th</sup> January 2006, requesting support for the Telecommunications Masts (Planning Control) Bill, which was originally due to be presented for its second reading on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2006, but was adjourned until 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2006.
- 4.7.3 The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee unanimously agreed to support David Curry's Telecommunications (Planning Control) Bill and call for telecommunication masts to be the subject of full planning controls with permitted development rights removed. The matter was considered across all political parties of the Council who have agreed a statement of support for the general principle that all telecommunications developments should be decided through the full planning process.
- 4.7.4 A copy of the letter from the Campaign for Planning Sanity, dated 7<sup>th</sup> January 2006, together with the Cabinet's response was forwarded to Dr Richard Taylor, MP, key spokespersons for all national political parties and all Worcestershire MPs for their consideration, with a request to support the Cabinet in its response to the Bill.
- 4.7.5 It was agreed that the critical part of the Bill was that permitted development rights would be removed to require all masts to be the subject of a full application. Permitted development rights allowed only 56 days to deal with the matter after which there was a deemed approval. This, in reality meant only one committee cycle and did not allow for site visits or further enquiries to be made.
- 4.7.6 The Telecommunication Masts (Planning Control) Bill will not conclude its second reading by Parliament until October 10<sup>th</sup> 2006.

#### **RECOMMENDED to Cabinet**

**The Cabinet continue to urge Dr Richard Taylor, MP, key spokespersons for all national political parties and all Worcestershire MPs to support David Curry's Telecommunications (Planning Control) Bill and call for telecommunication masts to be the subject of full planning controls with permitted development rights removed, when the Bill is re-considered by Parliament on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2006.**

#### 4.8 Telecommunications Masts (Planning Control) Bill

In March 2006, the ODPM published a report prepared by the University of Reading and Arup which reviewed the operation and effectiveness of the Code of Best Practice on the mobile phone network development.



#### 4.8 Telecommunications Code of Practice

The research involved interviews with approximately 30 local planning authorities, the 5 mobile phone operators, O2 Airwave (responsible for the tetra network), agents and a number of community groups or representatives with an interest in this type of development.

The objectives of the study were:-

1. To assess how far the aims of the Code had been achieved
2. To evaluate the impact, effect and effectiveness of the Code's guidance
3. To assess to which extent to which local planning authorities have effectively operated the guidance
4. To assess the public perception of the Code and its effectiveness, particularly in regard to consultation with local communities and their representatives
5. To gauge local planning authorities' views on the operators' performance in implementing the Code
6. To identify areas or particular issues within the Code that have been successful or have been widely or effectively implemented and give examples of best practice or learning points that could be shared with other local authorities
7. To identify areas and issues within the Code or not covered within the Code that need to be addressed and to make recommendations to improve the effectiveness and implementation
8. To make recommendations for change that would facilitate better community consultation

The report concludes that from their enquiries local authorities and operators both felt the annual submission of roll out plans was an important and worthwhile part of the code. Although 85% of LPA's interviewed stated that they were invited to discuss roll out plans by individual operators, only 37% indicated that they actively took up these invitations. LPA's attributed this to a lack of resources and the pressure of performance targets in other areas pushing telecommunications down their list of priorities. Whilst generally welcoming roll out plans, LPA's did raise some concerns regarding the variation in the information provided by different operators. Over half of the LPA's interviewed, however, considered that the opportunity to raise potential problems at an early stage was valuable.

With regard to preapplication discussions, it was considered that these were a very valuable tool.

The report however states that whilst 78% of those LPA's interviewed generally acknowledged the value of active participation at the pre-application stage, limited

time and resources did not always allow them to undertake meaningful discussions on prior approvals and planning permissions.

The majority of LPA's consulted, considered that pre-application community consultation by operators was beneficial but again there were management issues raised. Sometimes the community was consulted before any information was provided to the LPA. As a result of the community consultation, members of public contacted the LPA with questions which the LPA were unable to answer due to a lack of information.

It was felt that the traffic light system was too complicated for it to be of general practical use. Confusion was caused through the different stages of consultation as an application proceeded.

Acknowledging that the public expectation of how they might be involved in decisions, means that new and updated ways of consulting need to be considered to ensure that a wider community involvement is achieved.

The weighting to establish a level of consultation also needs to be kept under review. A change to the traffic lights colour coding is also suggested, particularly as the colour red seems to indicate danger in many people's minds.

With regard to alternative sites, it was identified that more explanation is required of the reasons why alternative sites are dismissed and also why those particular sites were looked at in the first place to reassure decision makers and the community that the alternatives were realistic for consideration in the first place.

The Code of Best Practice is obviously a voluntary code and this is generally seen as a weakness. One option that was considered was whether the code should be adopted as an annex to PPG8 which would necessitate significant re-drafting or alternatively to identify elements in the code that could be transferred into a companion guide to a revised PPG8 which would be likely to be accompanied by a revised Code of Best Practice.

In summary, it is believed that roll out planning should continue and the ongoing work to improve the process should also continue. There should be a continued emphasis on front loading the consultation process and the traffic light model should be reviewed. The consultation techniques recommended by the traffic light model should also be updated. There should be greater clarification of the status of the consultation being carried out and what it is intended to achieve.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**In the event that a consultation document is issued inviting the Council's comments on the Code of Practice that the Council support the adoption of the Code as part of a revised PPG8, either by incorporation of the Code into the Guidance or into a companion guide to accompany the Guidance.**

## **5. DRAFT Recommendations**

### **RECOMMENDED to Cabinet**

- 1. Council ask the Mobile Operators' Association to request the Mobile Phone Operators to update the Rollout Plan on a quarterly basis.**
- 2. An annual Presentation from representatives of the Mobile Operators' Association be invited to the Prosperity Panel to coincide with the production of the Rollout Plan.**
- 3. No action be taken at this time to prevent Wyre Forest District Council owned property being available to mobile phone network operators. However, any request be subject to the agreement of the majority of Members within the relevant Ward, before it is approved by the Council (this does not apply to applications or notifications to the Council as Local Planning Authority).**
- 4. That mobile phone operators be encouraged to share masts on Council owned land, when appropriate and wherever possible.**
- 5. The Council maintain an up-to-date list of all approved base stations/masts, which should be readily available for public inspection, to assist both the public and operators considering site sharing opportunities.**
- 6. That it notes the Panel's view that:**
  - The widespread use of mobile phones by children for non-essential calls should be discouraged.**
  - The mobile phone industry should refrain from promoting the use of mobile phones by children.**
  - The County Council also be referred to the Department of Health's leaflet on Mobile Phones and Health.**
- From a health point of view an educational programme should be considered, and the Panel therefore requests the following:**
  - a) the County Council Health Scrutiny Panel consider an education programme warning children of the potential risk of intensive mobile phone use, and**
  - b) the County Council Health Scrutiny Panel consider issuing guidance to Head Teachers and School**

**Governors with regard to the potential risk of intensive mobile phone use.**

- 7. The Cabinet continue to urge Dr Richard Taylor, MP, key spokespersons for all national political parties and all Worcestershire MPs to support David Curry's Telecommunications (Planning Control) Bill and call for telecommunication masts to be the subject of full planning controls with permitted development rights removed, when the Bill is re-considered by Parliament on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2006.**
  
- 8. In the event that a consultation document is issued inviting the Council's comments on the Code of Practice that the Council support the adoption of the Code as part of a revised PPG8, either by incorporation of the Code into the Guidance or into a companion guide to accompany the Guidance.**

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 Despite public concern about the safety of mobile phones and base stations, little research specifically relevant to these emissions has been published in the peer-reviewed scientific literature. This presumably reflects the fact that it is only recently that mobile phones have been widely used by the public and as yet there has been little concrete evidence relating to potential health effects caused by exposure to radiation from mobile phone technology. The Panel shares the public's concerns about the lack of scientific evidence to rule out perceived health risks.
- 6.2 There continues to be conflicting views regarding the links between health and mobile phone masts. Some people remain convinced that there are adverse health affects from mobile phone masts. In contrast there is scientific and medical evidence which disputes such claims as an exaggeration. In any case, the dilemma faced by the general public seems to be that whilst it is acceptable to have a mobile phone, few would choose to have a mobile phone mast located near to them. Their reasons ranged from health and safety issues, loss of visual amenity, and devaluation to their homes.
- 6.3 The Group was concerned that children, in particular, may be more vulnerable to mobile phone use because of the developing nervous system, the greater absorption of energy in the tissues of the head and a longer lifetime of exposure. However, the existence of conflicting findings from research into links between health and mobile phone masts has only resulted in a 'perceived' health risk.
- 6.4 The Chairman is pleased to advise that a worthwhile scrutiny exercise has been undertaken, with several achievable draft recommendations identified.
- 6.5 The Task and Finish Group's interpretation of the evidence and its draft recommendations for the Council's Cabinet are appended to this report.
- 6.6 The Chairman of the Panel wishes her thanks to go to all Members of the Panel for their contributions and assistance in the Scrutiny exercise and for those officers who attended the meetings and took responsibility for reporting back on information requested by the Panel.
- 6.7 The Panel's Work Programme for the forthcoming municipal year will be updated to include progress reports relating to Mobile Phone Masts.

## 7. Background Papers

- Scoping form
- Notes from the seminar held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2005 with representatives from the Mobile Operators' Association and telecommunications operators
- Notes from the seminar held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2005 with Dr M Clark of the Health Protection Agency
- Briefing Note dated 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2005 and accompanying Site Plan outlining the rollout information relating to the five telecommunications operators
- Report to Birmingham City Council: Review of the Siting of Telecommunications Equipment on Council Land and Premises
- Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 'Telecommunications – a Design Guide' – from Coventry City Council (Draft document for consultation dated June 2005)
- The following Fact Sheets:
  - How mobile phones work and the need for radio base stations
  - Electromagnetic Fields and Public Health
  - Mobile phone base stations and health
  - Mobile phones and health
  - Site Sharing
  - Public exposure guidelines for mobile phone base stations
- Summary of Recent Reports on Mobile Phones and Health (2000-2004) – Z J Sienkiewicz and C I Kowalczyk

## **8. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Glossary of Terms

Appendix 2 - Results from Young People's Mobile Phone Survey

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Glossary of Terms**

**HPA**

Health Protection Agency

**Radiofrequency (RF)**

the type of radiation emitted from mobile phones

**NRPB**

National Radiological Protection Board

**ICNIRP**

International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection

**Analogue**

Old style mobile phones

**AGNIR**

Independent Advisory Group on Non-ionising Radiation

**GSM and 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation (2G) services**

Digital mobile phones (the majority of all modern mobiles) and the current technology for the operation of mobile phone masts

**3<sup>rd</sup> Generation (3G) services**

'3G' is a term used to describe the next generation of mobile phone systems

**WHO**

World Health Organisation

**TETRA**

Terrestrial Trunked Radio

**IARC**

International Agency for Research on Cancer



## **Useful information**

Health Protection Agency Headquarters  
Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards  
Radiation Protection Division  
Chilton  
Didcot, Oxon  
OX11 0RQ  
Telephone 01235 831600  
Fax 01235 833891  
Email [rpd@hpa-rp.org.uk](mailto:rpd@hpa-rp.org.uk)

Code of Best Practice

[www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

Report of the Stewart Group

[www.doh.gov.uk/mobile.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/mobile.htm)

General Information

[www.mobilemastinfo.com](http://www.mobilemastinfo.com)

[www.sitefinder.radio.gov.uk](http://www.sitefinder.radio.gov.uk)